

OBSERVE NOVEMBER 13 AS SAVE CSIR DAY

WHY PROTEST?

Since the mid eighties the CSIR System has been experiencing drastic cuts in its budget. The budgetary support for CSIR laboratories has been declining so rapidly that the funds are barely sufficient to cover salary and other expenses. The crisis of financial inputs facing CSIR is so severe that the authorities were compelled to go public. Recently, the DGCSIR publicly announced the lack of funds for some of the major programmes like super conductivity and coal gasification. When India is opening its markets to the foreign competition, the government should be strengthening the capabilities of CSIR laboratories and not weakening them. The CSIR capabilities are critical for a country like India both in order to absorb new generic technologies and to develop appropriate technologies.

The prospects for extra budgetary resources are also becoming more bleak under the new policies. In their one sided emphasis on foreign capital and technology the new policies are indirectly having disastrous results for the CSIR laboratories. Rather than strengthening the links of CSIR laboratories with their users the new policies are weakening them. In order to tackle the problem of its budgetary deficit the government is reducing support to the S&T departments. As these S&T departments are the main source of funds for strategic research for the laboratories of CSIR, there is a decline in the investments for development of the new generic capabilities. Fresh recruitments are also not taking place at the requisite rate. Combined together these developments have serious long-term implications for the CSIR system.

CSIR-SWA believes that in view of the highly inadequate in-house R&D infrastructure which will require atleast a decade or two to build up even if industries start in right earnest with immediate effect, there is no other alternative for the CSIR laboratories but to continue work on the problems of interest to industry. The industry and economy oriented R&D work is broadly of three types: nation wide technology missions (e.g. utilization of poor quality Indian coals, petroleum and natural gas), industry wide requirements (e.g. materials development, mastery of generic technology) and firm-specific requirements. The burden of supporting the nation and industry wide requirements related R&D work will have to be borne by the government to a large extent. There fore, it is our demand that the government should provide a separate technology development fund of Rupees 200 crores annually for the industry related work to CSIR. This fund will be used for supporting only those projects in which the users have agreed to invest a part stake by committing financial resources and personnel. This will also improve public accountability of the CSIR laboratories in the area of industrial research.

To encourage absorption, improvement and diffusion of imported technologies and to discourage repetitive imports binding provisions are required to ensure the development of user supplier networks of researchers, producers and users of machinery, consumers, etc which cannot be created through market forces and need planned efforts by the government. It is our demand that through a statutory mechanism the government should induce the industry to identify the projects of industry-wide interest. The funding for these projects will come from the CSIR technology development fund. The capabilities of CSIR will provide the firms with the commonly required facilities for collaborative R&D. In the Indian environment, as a neutral publicly-funded R&D system the laboratories of CSIR are best suited for this task.

In addition, the capabilities of CSIR must serve various statutory and non-profit public interest functions which cannot be served by the organizations merely working for profit. These functions are (i) development of capabilities for the mastery of generic technologies including advancement of science (ii) mapping & resource quality evaluation (iii) protection of environment, (iv) standardization, testing and calibration, (v) development and utilization of R&D capabilities for societal missions. To support all these functions the budgetary support must be adequate. Similarly, to meet the requirements of small and medium scale industry the funds will have to come from the government to a large extent. There fore, it is our demand that the government

should immediately provide all the necessary required funds for the proposed programmes of CSIR under these functions without any cut in the budget.

We are also protesting against the CSIR management. The CSIR staff is well aware that the CSIR management has been neglecting its due role of planning and control of R&D. To a large extent this negligence has sullied the image of CSIR. Rather than developing the CSIR system of laboratories in the direction of inter-laboratory programmes and technology packaging the management is allowing the CSIR system to drift towards complete autonomy to the laboratory directors. Considerable amount of scarce resources devoted to R&D in the CSIR laboratories are ineffective today because of the absence of integrated and consistent technological planning. It is our demand that to ensure public accountability the laboratory directors should be given the responsibility to develop inter-laboratory programmes and technology development projects. Their ability to team up with the other CSIR laboratories and to motivate their own institutions to join inter-laboratory programmes and technology development projects should be treated as an important yardstick for the evaluation of their individual performance.

Immediate steps are needed to develop a strategic plan of ten year duration to provide clear priorities for the CSIR system. These proposals must contain suitable decisions for the staff retraining and fresh placement to deploy them in conformity with the priorities laid down in the strategic plan. There is a need to complement the individual based reward system with a suitable system of team rewards team efforts. It is our demand that the Management Council should be an elected body and responsible for the preparation and implementation of the decisions taken on R&D matters in the laboratories. Similarly, the Research council should be restructured to include the programme coordinators and elected areawise representatives as members to broad base the interaction between the members of Research Council and the laboratory staff. Ensure strict implementation of the rule of six years tenure for the laboratory directors. Introduce a new laboratory performance evaluation system to improve the control of progress of the programmes and projects. Ensure selective upgradation of the research areas promising excellence by giving them appropriate autonomy and inputs.

We are also protesting against the fact of the plans being made to seek remedies for the problems of CSIR in the proposals like retrenchment and exit of CSIR staff. Proposals for the transfer and closure of laboratories are being put forward. We reject all such proposals and demand that stop these counter productive plans. Undertake a special scanning of the technologies lying on the laboratory shelf and take steps to commercialize them.

Finally by observing November 13, 1992 as SAVE CSIR DAY, the staff of CSIR will show that SWA and EA are determined to make sacrifices for saving CSIR and that we are willing to make constructive suggestions for the improvement of CSIR. We will also demonstrate our resolve to make the fight for CSIR as an integral component of the larger struggle for S&T self reliance.

Issued by
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President
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